



For The Love Of The Sport

Story by: Sgt. Brian P. Glass
18th Fires Brigade Public Affairs

Fort Bragg, NC – For each of us, we have our reasons for loving to do what we enjoy. For some it's the roar of the crowd, seeing yourself on the big screen, the locking of the eyes with your competitor as you get ready to square off and knowing you gave it your all.

For Cpl. Andrew Szymborski, cannon crew member, B. Btry, 3rd Battalion, 321st Field Artillery Regiment, from Crown Point, Indiana, it's part of what fuels his love for wrestling. His love for the sport started by accident while trying to better himself at football.

"I started wrestling in fourth grade, I had a coach in football who was a wrestling coach who told me to come out because it would make me better at football. It did help me in football but I started to become really good at wrestling," said Szymborski.

That lead Andrew into pursuing wrestling and continuing to compete and as he got older he competed in the Indiana state championships in front of his family on the states biggest wrestling stage.

"It was great just being under the lights at the state finals, it was an amazing experience. My dad was there recording it and seeing myself on the megatron, there is no better feeling than wrestling in front of fifty thousand people at Conseco Fieldhouse."

After high school, Andrew was given a wrestling scholarship to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). Once there he competed on a much bigger stage and got his first looks at what being in the military could do for him.

"We (VMI) went against some teams from the big ten conference, we competed up and down the east coast, we competed against some really good competition."

"While I was there I met some good NCOs (non-commissioned officers) through their ROTC (reserve officers training corps) program and I learned a lot from them so I came to enjoy the military."

After joining, Szymborski made his way to Fort Bragg and his love for wrestling pushing him into competing in combatives.

"When I came here last fall (to Fort Bragg) I started to hear about these combatives tournaments. I got into it and then I became level two combatives certified. I started talking to the Instructor and he found out about my wrestling background. He said hey there is this guy from the Army wrestling team, go talk to him. The guy told me to apply so I did and here I am waiting to go (at the end of this month)."
To get to a level of success that Szymborski has hasn't been easy. It helps to have a support system helping to push you through hard times. Andrew has that with his parents Don and Diana.

"Through his involvement in wrestling, our love for the sport grew," said Diana. "We spent many weekends traveling to tournaments and have formed lifelong friendships with many other wrestling families."

His parents saw his development from an 8-year old who started wrestling and playing football to the man he is today and they are very proud of him.

"We feel that wrestling has made him more disciplined. I was against him enlisting in the Army but it turned out to be a perfect fit for him. He is a caring, loving son but the Army has made him a man. We are excited for his new opportunity," said Diana.

That new opportunity comes at the end of this month when Andrew goes to All-Army wrestling team camp. After he completes that, they will let him know if he made the team. If he makes the team he will be part of the World Class Athlete Program, which gives him a shot at his ultimate dream, competing in the Olympics in 2016.

Andrew is excited but also realistic about how big of an opportunity he has in front of him.

"I'm very humble and excited for this opportunity because it gives me a shot at pursuing my dream of being in the Olympics. We would compete in all the tournaments (leading up to the Olympics). Who wouldn't want to train and get paid to do what you love to do."

If selected, Szymborski would leave Fort Bragg for Fort Carson, Co. and be part of the team full-time. He said he would love the chance to represent the Army in the Olympic games.



Soldier And Family Together Again

Story by: Sgt. Brian P. Glass

Fort Bragg, NC – For most Soldiers who have joined the Army since the War on Terrorism began, deploying overseas has been part of the job. Everyone whether married or not has left Family behind to put their country first. After serving the country overseas, Soldiers come home to their families and begin to work towards making their families whole again.

For Staff Sgt. Joshua Jolly, launcher chief for B. Btry 3rd Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment (HIMARS), 18th Fires Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, just returned from a nine month deployment in Afghanistan this year. Jolly is excited to be home with his family once again, knowing that even though he was gone, things don't slow down because he has been away.

"We've gotten back into the daily routines of coming back in from pt and going into work. We've had a lot of half days which has really helped to help us at least a half a day with our families. It's different seeing new faces in the unit that got here when we were gone," said Jolly.

Jolly, dealing with changes at work and on post at Fort Bragg also deals with being part of his family again, something any parents knows is tough to be away from for any amount of time.

"This is my 3rd deployment, I've been to Korea twice, so that's a lot of time away from the family so I'm pretty used to it. They know the routine. Having Skype helps a lot, being able to see the kids, them being able to see me versus talking on the phone. It's hard to watch your kids grow up on a computer screen but having it is better than nothing."

Part of being back is that time with the Family and Jolly has used every free moment he has to make up for lost time with his wife and children.

"(We've) Gone to a movie here or there. I've gone to their school and ate lunch with the kids, saw each of the kids classrooms. My youngest daughter and son started school and I hadn't seen their classroom or take them to school. I was able to do that and it meant a lot to them."

"(We've been) Sitting in the living room, popping up some popcorn, setting up tents in the living room with couch cushions. They haven't been able to do that in nine months so every little thing means the world to them," said Jolly.

While Jolly re-builds his relationship with family, his wife Shannon kept the family together at home with their three children Madilyn (8), Rylee Ann (4) and Joshua Jr. (3) and is very excited to have her husband home once again.



Staff Sgt. Joshua Jolly of Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion 27th Field Artillery Regiment, hugs his kids after returning from Afghanistan at their re-deployment ceremony Nov. 4, 2013.

"It is amazing to have him home. There is nothing better than being a family," said Shannon. "Our children always adjust quickly to daddy being home. The relationship he has with them is a special one."

Raising the three children with Jolly overseas has become routine Shannon says. As he has been deployed for three of the six years they have been married. The Family kept a system in place to help them get along until he returned.

"I have come to realize that for me, staying busy was the only way to get through the deployment. We would always take trips home to Oklahoma because being around Family helps," said Shannon.

"We would plan our days around daddy calling on Skype. Being able to see his face and hear his voice made a world of difference."

Knowing the children needed her to be strong, Shannon kept it together for the kids and herself, but it wasn't easy.

"A deployment is a roller coaster of emotions. One minute happy, the next sad, always lonely without my love. It's okay to cry, to worry, to be sad but it is more important to shelter our children from the harsh realities of the war daddy leave to fight."

As the Jolly family is back home and re-adjusting day by day, they know the love they have for each other will help them get through all the days ahead.

"There is always adjustments when he returns home from deployment but we find our rhythm and in only a short matter of time, we are whole!"

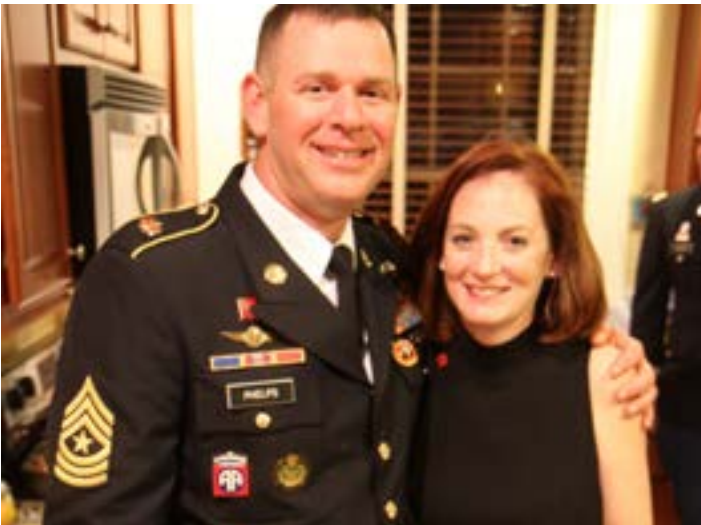
BEST OF JANUARY 2014



Soldiers of Headquarters Headquarters Battery, 18th Fires Brigade held a grenade range Jan. 27. The range qualified Soldiers on live hand grenades.



Col. Stephen G. Smith (left) commander of 18th Fires Brigade presided over the 82nd Airborne Division retirement ceremony Jan. 23.



The leaders of 18th Fires Brigade came together for a holiday party at Col. Stephen G. Smith, commander of 18th Fires Brigades house Jan. 10. The party applauded the success of 2013 and looked forward to 2014.



Col. Stephen G. Smith, (left) commander of 18th Fires Brigade promoted Christopher Black (right) and Kevin Shepard to the rank of First Sergeant in the U.S. Army after being laterally appointed in a ceremony at the Squires conference room Jan. 22. Black will be the new First Sergeant for Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment and Shepard will take over Alpha Battery.